

**Statement on UPPR Cancer Cluster from
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People may ask why now. Why not wait. The community has been waiting for years.

The mission of the Houston Health Department is to work in partnership with the community to promote and protect the health and social well-being Of Houstonians and the environment in which they live.

On June 13th we met with the Quality-of-Life Subcommittee of the Houston City Council to give an update on the Union Pacific railroad site and shared the following:

- A creosote plume extended under 110 properties
- Residents living near the site complained of adverse health effects
- The Houston Health Department conducted environmental surface soil sampling in July 2022 because of receiving transport ledgers documenting the materials from two toxic waste sites which were used to create “creosote extender”.
- Soil samples were taken and analyzed for dioxin and furans (47 samples, 42 locations).
- Dioxins were present in all soil samples taken around the community
- 37 or 79% of samples were found to exceed the EPA regional screening level for cancer risk for residents (4.77 ppt TCDD TEQ).
- The highest concentration is over 1900 times the limit
- In October 2022 attic dust samples test revealed the presence of dioxin/furan

- At the request of EPA the Health Department disseminated educational flyers regarding Dioxin safety to the community.
- City of Houston staff created a Community Advisory Board to ensure that we were accurately representing community interests. As expressed to us the community interests are focused on access to healthcare and relocation.

When we got to questions and answers after the presentation, one of the Council Members reminded me that I had left out the most important fact and that is that there was already a cancer cluster identified in the area. I was embarrassed because we are involved because people's health and wellbeing are at stake. We, as the Houston Health Department, are involved because people's health and well-being are at stake.

There may be scientific debate about what caused the health issues, but the fact of the matter is that we started off knowing that there is a cancer cluster in this community. People have lived and died from cancers in this area with chemicals that are known to cause the types of cancers identified.

There was pollution emanating from the UPRR site for decades, it is documented even though we don't have measured concentrations, we know exposure occurred.

Records of violations and complaints as far back as 45 years ago still exist, and likely occurred prior to that but were not retained because of their age.

After years of complaints and incidents involving potential contamination in this location, the community felt they were dying of higher rates of cancer than was normal.

A cancer cluster analysis by the State Health Department confirmed the community's beliefs.

Each of these cancers from the analysis has been shown to be linked to the kinds of chemicals found at the UPRR site.

12 census tracts ringing the site were found to have an observed number of specific cancer cases that were statistically significantly higher than the expected number of cases.

The state found four different types of cancer clusters. These include larynx, liver, lung and bronchus (grouped) and acute lymphoblastic leukemia. In total, from these clusters, there were 79 more cases of cancer in this small area than expected. In the case of childhood leukemia alone, the number of cancer cases was 350% higher than expected.

Cases equal people. On July 14th, it will have been two years since Corinthian Giles aged 13, who lived two blocks from the site passed away from leukemia. He is one more person from this area that has been added to the Texas Cancer Registry. It is because of children like Corinthian and other residents, that we are pushing for action.

It has been almost 40 years since operations ceased at the site and initial evidence of contamination was documented, and yet there has been very little clean-up and evidence of contamination is still present in the community nearby.

We in the Health Department believe that people are still at risk. More testing is likely to reveal what we already know. Dioxin is present in the soil. We know a creosote plume is under 110 homes. People have already expressed an interest in relocation and access to health care. Let's

respect their interests by being responsive to their expressed interest regarding relocation and access to health care.

We as a city government have the responsibility for protecting the health and well being of the residents of Houston. Documenting our efforts are not enough. When responsible entities are not accountable, we still have the responsibility to protect the public's health. Common sense and good judgement must prevail. 45 years of complaints and current knowledge about what's going on around that site require more immediate action. A complaint back from the 1970's documents the concerns of a landlord who was concerned for the health of his tenants, especially that of the children and infants. People matter.

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